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THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN POLICY IN THE FAR EAST¹

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The aims and methods of American diplomacy have rarely been unworthy of the high ideals of American democracy. The diplomats may at times have been lacking in experience or in capacity; they have rarely been wanting in worthy motives. In no part of the world, down to the present cataclysm, has American diplomacy played a more commendable rôle or a more successful one than in the Far East. A generation ago this statement might have called for some defence; but time has demonstrated the fundamental wisdom of America's foreign policy, and it may safely be said that she has conquered with ideas where others have failed with the sword.

For a hundred and thirty years the United States has had interests in the Far East: First, the commerce of her adventurous merchants, then the pious work of her missionary bodies, and, finally, territorial possessions off the coast of Asia.

The American seamen and merchants who took part in the old China trade were stout democrats, who believed in the saving grace of business competition, who asked for nothing but fair play in the East and sought no special advantages for their country or themselves. Imperialism was undreamed of by the Americans of those days. Interference in the domestic affairs of foreign nations seemed a negation of the principles of the American revolution. Respect for the law of the land, even for Chinese law, seemed to them a self-evident duty, and, after the first war

¹An address delivered at the Bi-centenary of the University of California, March 18, 1918.

between Britain and China, a governor at Canton testified that the American merchants had been "respectfully observant of the laws." And because of their good conduct they won favor.

The first treaty negotiated by the United States in the Far East was with the kingdom of Siam, in 1833. The second was with China, in 1844. Although the trade of the United States at Canton stood second only to Great Britain, yet the Americans had not joined Britain in the so-called "Opium War." But every commercial concession which was granted to Great Britain was freely granted to us, and the crude extraterritorial provision in the British supplementary treaty was well defined by Caleb Cushing in the American document. In the sixteen years of friction between the first and second European wars, although at times the American representatives were sore tried and believed that only through war could foreign rights be maintained, yet the government at Washington counseled moderation, and thus America again was spared participation in a war, by no means wholly justifiable, against China.

Within this period came the opening of Japan to foreign intercourse after more than two centuries of seclusion. Because American interest in Japan was greater than that of any other power, America made the well-considered attempt to convince the Japanese of the error of their seclusive policy in the days when steam was shortening the girdle of the globe. To Commodore Perry, for the wise and sympathetic manner in which he conducted the negotiations, and to a handful of forward-looking Japanese in the Shogun's castle should be ascribed the credit for this epoch-making expedition. The gates were, however, but slightly opened, although British, Russians and Dutch were granted privileges like our own. It was the American consul-general, Townsend Harris, who, unsupported by battleships, won from the Shogun a liberal treaty of commerce. This was a personal triumph. Harris had convinced the Japanese, during a year's residence at Shimoda, of his unquestioned honesty and good-will. When they realized that they could believe in him, then they followed

his advice implicitly. And be it remembered to his credit, he took no advantage of their ignorance, but framed a treaty which protected as well as might be the interests both of his own country and of Japan. For almost three years after the treaty went into effect Harris remained at his post trying to harmonize the conflicting views of his European colleagues and of the Japanese ministers. There is good reason to believe that if Harris had not stood alone at one of these crises, two of the European powers would have become involved in measures which might easily have led to war with Japan.

If there is one word which runs as a golden thread through the dispatches between our representatives in the Far East and our State Department, it is the word "moderation." Sometimes it is coupled with "forbearance," and again with "justice." But over against the advocates of strong measures and the "gun-boat policy" American diplomacy stood for moderation, forbearance, justice, for, as we call it today, the "self-determination of peoples," the right of Asiatic peoples to work out their destiny without foreign interference.

In China, Anson Burlingame, at a time when American influence was at its lowest ebb during our Civil War, succeeded in introducing a policy of coöperation among the foreign ministers to take the place of individual force. He also became the first envoy of China to the western powers, and in the treaty negotiated by him in Washington, in 1868, appeared this summary of American policy:

The United States, always disclaiming and discouraging all practices of unnecessary dictation and intervention by one nation in the affairs or domestic administration of another, do hereby freely disclaim and disavow any intention or right to interfere in the domestic administration of China in regard to the construction of railroads, telegraphs, or other material improvements.

If such a clause had been accepted by all the great powers, and honestly observed, how different would have been the recent history of the Far East? How much more honorable the story of European diplomacy? How many

lives offered up on Manchurian battlefields would have been spared!

In a few years Japan entered upon her long struggle for the revision of the commercial treaties. These compacts contained two features which were repugnant to the national consciousness of Japan—the extraterritorial privileges of foreigners and the low conventional tariff. The former was first written in a Russian treaty of 1855, while the latter was framed in 1866 and replaced the very fair tariff in the Townsend Harris treaty. In his treaty Harris had apparently provided for the revision of its terms after July 4, 1872. The wording of his text was followed in the treaties negotiated by other nations, but for historical reasons the British treaty substituted July 1 for July 4. But when the Japanese sought the expected revision they found that the alterations depended upon the consent of both parties, and that unless all the treaty powers were willing to agree to the proposed changes, Japan would be bound by the irksome provisions. In other words, Harris should have written what he really had in mind, that the treaties would expire in 1872, and then new negotiations would take place.

The struggle of the Japanese for the revision of the treaties makes a long story and one that is not very pleasant reading in these days of high idealism. The depression is relieved only by a consideration of the record of the United States. When the powers refused any measure of revision, and Japan realized that she would have to remodel her codes and courts before she could gain jurisdiction over the persons and property of foreigners, she then tried to secure tariff autonomy, believing, in her innocence, that the powers surely could have no objection to allowing her to control her own tariff. But in this respect she was soon undeceived, for the United States was the only nation that would sign such a treaty. At every stage of the negotiations, which were carried on over a period of twenty years, the United States, acting on the principles of moderation and justice, sought to further the claims of Japan. But American influence was small in the world at large

before 1898, and it was not until Great Britain finally yielded, in 1894, that revision could be effected.

An interesting event in this period was the visit of General Grant to the Orient in 1879. In China and in Japan, in conversation with statesmen and officials and with the Mikado himself, he enunciated the American policy that she had no interests inconsistent with the complete independence and well-being of all Oriental nations. And he urged the two states to settle their differences and unite in strengthening themselves against European aggressions in Eastern Asia. Not only did he give pertinent advice in regard to the Loochoo Islands controversy between China and Japan, but he also urged them to unite in a joint political control of Korea, to quiet their own disputes in that country and to close the door to unfriendly European interference. Japan acted on this advice, and a treaty with China was drafted in 1880, but Li Hung-chang prevented its approval by the throne. And thus were sown the seeds of the Chino-Japanese War.

And, finally, General Grant gave this advice to the Mikado:

American statesmen have long since perceived the danger of European interference in the political affairs of North and South America. So guard against this danger. And, as a measure of self-protection, it has become the settled policy of the United States that no European power shall be permitted to enlarge its dominions or extend its influence by any interference in American affairs. It is likewise the policy of America in the Orient, I may say it is the law of our empire in the Pacific, that the integrity and independence of China and Japan should be preserved and maintained.

This counsel was given twenty-one years before John Hay sent out his integrity of China notes. Unlike the Americas, Asia possessed no state then strong enough to enunciate a Far Eastern Monroe Doctrine. Later, Japan alone had to repel the Russian advance into Manchuria and Korea, and since the outbreak of the Great War she has let the world know that she would tolerate no further European aggressions upon China.

A striking manifestation of the high place American diplomacy had won for itself came with the outbreak of the Chino-Japanese War in 1894, when both belligerents turned over the protection of their nationals in the enemy country to the United States. Never before, to my knowledge, had such a tribute been paid to a nation's honesty and fairness. And it was the more marked because in the eyes of the world at large American influence was but little esteemed.

It was the successful issue of the Spanish-American War which gave the United States the influence in world politics which her strength deserved. With the acquisition of territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific—Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines—the nation seemed to have emerged from her old self-centered provincialism to play a part upon the world stage. The growth of American influence in the Far East may be at once noted after the close of the war. A good understanding with Great Britain was developed in those days, and as Japan gained in strength she threw in her lot with the English-speaking peoples.

Before 1898, therefore, American influence in the Far East was based upon men and ideas, rather than upon power. American diplomats were, with rare exceptions, worthy exponents of American diplomacy. It is of interest to note the use which was made of men of missionary training in our diplomatic service, especially in China, where Dr. Peter Parker, a pioneer medical missionary, served as secretary of legation, *chargé d'affaires*, and commissioner between 1844 and 1857, and Dr. S. Wells Williams acted as secretary between 1855 and 1877. And the part played by American advisers in shaping the diplomatic policies of eastern countries should be remembered. From the early seventies until 1914, the adviser of the Japanese Foreign Office was always an American. E. Peshine Smith, Eli T. Sheppard, and Henry W. Denison, held this post, the latter for thirty-four years; and if Durham W. Stevens had not been assassinated by Korean fanatics in San Francisco, he would no doubt have been Denison's successor. If, throughout this long period

Japanese diplomacy has stood out in contrast with that of some of the western states, no little credit must be given to the Americans who carried the ideals of American diplomacy over to their alien posts. Another missionary, Dr. McCartee, was foreign adviser at the most important Chinese legation, that at Tokyo, from 1877 to 1879, and at a later period, when China needed all the wise advice possible to extricate her from the abyss after her unhappy war with Japan, it was the late John W. Foster who accompanied Li Hung-chang on his mission to the peace conference at Shimonoseki.

In this period another principle, based upon moderation and justice, was established. Unearned or undeserved indemnities were twice returned to eastern nations. In 1883, the total amount received from Japan as our share of the Shimonoseki indemnity was returned, and in 1885 the balance of the Canton indemnity was returned to China. This principle has not yet been generally recognized by other powers, although with the return of over ten million dollars of the Boxer indemnity in 1908, the United States again affirmed it.

The principles of American diplomacy in the Far East had been formulated before 1898, but the prestige gained in the Spanish War increased the force of American influence. After nine months of indecision the United States, with the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, took possession of the Philippine Islands. This gave her a hostage to fortune in the Far East. The Islands were demanded by the United States primarily because it was our duty to the inhabitants, whom the fortunes of war had thrown into our hands. I question the accuracy of those who would assert that political and commercial interests dominated the policy of President McKinley. One test I would apply is this: if the Philippine Islands had been a part of Spain, inhabited by Spaniards and loyal to the mother-land, would the United States have taken them from her in 1898? Yet it must be remembered that, although our motives were high, the Islands were demanded as part of an indemnity, which included Porto Rico and Guam.

It was easy for a certain type of publicist to discount our pretensions, and to assert that America, which had carried her conquering eagles from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, had now swept on to the conquest of Asia. To us this sounded absurd; to an Asiatic it sounded reasonable enough.

It was the international rivalry in China, after the Chino-Japanese war, which gave American diplomacy a larger field in the Far East. In the exploitation of China, from 1896 to 1899, the United States had taken no part nor had she been able to exercise any influence upon the eager participants in what was considered to be the "Break-Up of China." But after the Spanish War the voice of America was at least listened to, and her influence for good was felt. The so-called "Open Door" notes, sent to the great powers by John Hay on September 6, 1899, were designed to secure their assent to the maintenance of the "Open Door" for commerce in the leased territories and spheres of interest held by them in China. The principle was by no means new. Great Britain and the United States had long stood for open commerce, without discrimination. The importance of these notes lies in the public promise of five European powers, and Japan, that they would continue to respect this principle. It should be remembered that Italy and Japan had no leaseholds at this period.

From that time on the United States has followed Far Eastern developments with hitherto unknown interest, and she has played a part of increasing importance. During the Boxer Uprising in 1900, the United States coöperated with the powers in the relief expedition, and during the long months of diplomatic negotiations at Peking, she stood out consistently for moderate measures of punishment and for a low indemnity. As Mr. Rockhill reported at the time:

Throughout the negotiations our object was to use the influence of our Government in the interest of justice and moderation and in a spirit of equal friendship to the powers negotiating jointly with us and the Chinese nation.

It was while the international relief expedition was assembling at Tientsin, and while the West echoed with the cries for vengeance upon China that the United States again moved to save that unhappy country. The "Integrity of China" notes of July 3, 1900, sent out by John Hay, serve to round out the "Open Door" notes of the preceding September: they asserted the purpose of the United States to be the rescue of the legations, the protection of American life, property and interests, and the suppression of the existing anarchy in North China. And they announced her policy to be that of seeking

a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire.

When favorable replies to these notes had been received from the powers, the moral victory of the United States had been achieved. Any power that would then encroach upon Chinese territory or independence would break faith with all the others. This was a triumph of ideas; it was based upon no treaty; it was supported by no armed force. Its real strength lay in "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind."

With the part played by the United States in the Far East since 1900 we are not concerned. The foundations of American policy were laid during the period of limited influence before 1899. There were times in those days when American principles, worthy in themselves, received scant attention from the other powers. But after 1899 these same principles received a hearing. And the so-called "Hay Doctrine" was but a flowering, under favorable conditions, of the seed sown by Cushing and Perry, Harris and Burlingame, Bingham and Low.

Within the last few years a small group of journalists has repeatedly charged our government and state department with ignorance or cowardice, or both, in dealing with Far Eastern affairs. The charge is made that the "Hay Doctrine" of the "Open Door" and the "Integrity of China"

is as vital an American policy as the Monroe Doctrine, and that it should be defended and maintained. Japan, they assert, has violated both parts of the "Hay Doctrine," and some have demanded that the United States proceed to war with Japan before it is too late.

If the premises of these gentlemen are correct, that the "Hay Doctrine" has equal force with the Monroe Doctrine, and that the Japanese have flouted the "Hay Doctrine," then the conclusion which they reach seems irresistible.

But, for myself, I have never been able to follow their line of reasoning. In the first place, there is really little comparison between the Monroe Doctrine and the "Hay Doctrine." The former is a doctrine which has received the approval not merely of the United States, but of the two Americas. And whereas in the days of weakness of the Latin American republics the United States was the only power able, if need be, to defend this continental doctrine, yet today most if not all the twenty-one republics would unite in its defence.

The "Hay Doctrine" was the formulation of a principle, recognized by all the world. But, at best, it represents officially only the views of the executive department of our government. The United States has signed no treaty guaranteeing the integrity of China and the principle of the "Open Door." It is very doubtful if any administration or any Senate would negotiate or ratify such a treaty, because of our national dislike for overseas entanglements.

On the other hand, all the powers which might have violated the principles laid down by Mr. Hay have signed solemn treaties to observe them. Japan, Russia, France, Germany and England have, in different compacts, agreed among themselves to respect the territorial integrity of China and the "Open Door." If any one of these powers violates these principles, the first nation to protest should be that whose treaty has been broken. In other words, all the interested powers have pledged themselves, in treaties, far more solemnly than in their exchanges of notes with us.

The real difficulty, I believe, lies in the loose way in which the "Hay Doctrine" is sometimes treated. I look

upon it as a logical development of the principles of American diplomacy already laid down in the Far East: It was the statement of a policy, based upon moderation and justice, designed to preserve the integrity of China and the equal participation of all the world in her commerce. The part of America lay in formulating and securing recognition of such a self-evident truth, but a truth which cut across the plans of certain powers. So long as America played fair, respected the principles which she had avowed, and reaffirmed them whenever they seemed to be forgotten, she fulfilled her full duty. And this affirmation has been made each time the principles seemed endangered: during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905; in the Root-Takahira notes of 1908, when the conduct of Japan in South Manchuria was being scrutinized, and in these notes the use of "peaceful means" is expressly stipulated; during the Chinese Revolution in 1911; and, finally, in 1917 in the Lansing-Ishii notes, "in order to silence mischievous reports that have from time to time been circulated." To do more, to wave the big stick whenever a charge was laid against a friendly power, would be unworthy of the dignity of a people who believed in the assured triumph of moderation and justice.

At this dark hour of the Great War, when a ruthless military autocracy, intoxicated by fleeting successes, has ground under its iron heel five of the nations of Europe, it seems almost fatuous to speak of the ultimate triumph of moderation and justice. But I would be blind to the teachings of history if I did not affirm it. Truth is not forever on the scaffold, nor is wrong forever on the throne. Mankind has struggled on from dark days to bright ones, through the morass to the firm ground and the high ground. Wrongs are righted, even though generations may intervene, and the eternal principle of justice abides long after man-made treaties are thrown to the winds. And just as I believe that the Allies will win in this Great War, and that the principles set forth by the chosen representative of the American people will be the determining factors in the final settlement, so I believe that in the days of recon-

struction in the Far East the principles laid down by American diplomats in the past, which reflected so well the spirit of their democracy, will have an increasing influence in molding not only the international relations but the continental policy of all Asia. Nothing is settled until it is settled right, and the American policies of moderation and justice and self-determination are founded in righteousness itself.